

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

40
MAY

©
02449

THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU



EXPLOSIVE
MARTIAL ARTS
ACTION..

AS THE SON OF
FU MANCHU
BATTLES
THE DEADLY
LEAGUE OF
ASSASSINS!

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



**FURY
ERUPTS
IN... THE MURDER AGENCY!**

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**."

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

TV-253

DOUG MOENCH
WRITER

PAUL GULACY
ARTIST

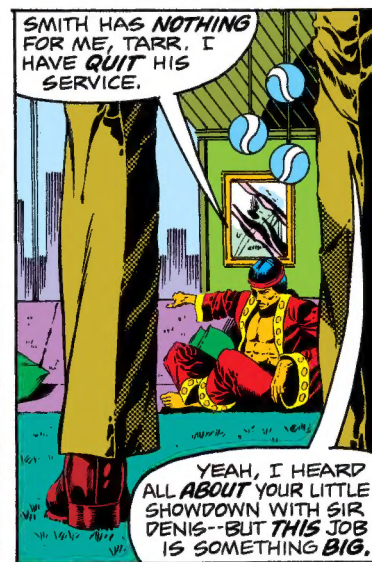
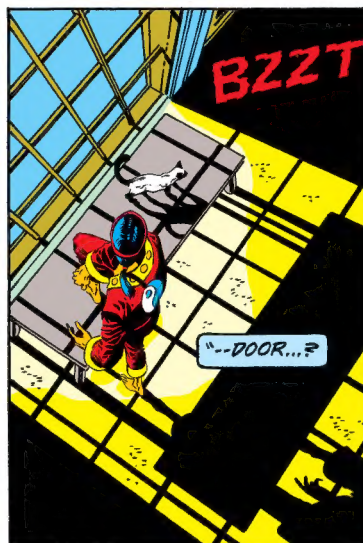
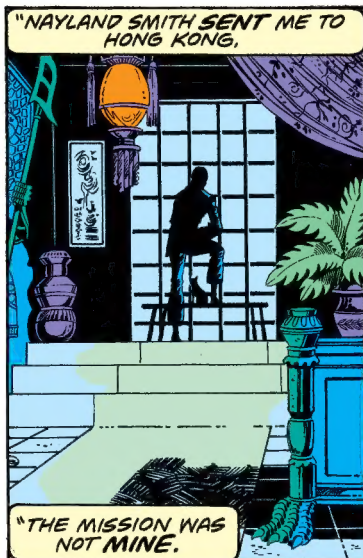
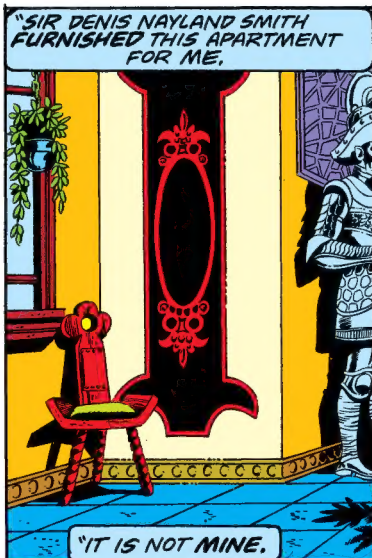
ANNETTE KAWECKI, LETTERS
PETRA GOLDBERG, COLORIST

MARV WOLFMAN
EDITOR

The MURDER AGENCY

"WINDOWS: BARRIERS TO ALL THE SENSES BUT SIGHT. EXTERNAL SIGHT, LOOKING OUT UPON THE NIGHTED SKYLINE OF LONDON, THE CITY IN WHICH I NOW LIVE, BUT A PLACE ALIEN TO MY BIRTH. AND INTERNAL SIGHT, THE WINDOW REFLECTING MY FACE AS ITS EXPRESSIONS REFLECT MY MIND'S MEMORIES...OF HONG KONG, FROM WHERE I HAVE JUST RETURNED, AND OF JULIETTE, WHOSE LOVE I THERE WITNESSED...OF SHEN KUEI, WHO RECEIVED HER LOVE AND REFLECTED IT...OF GANGSTERS, PERHAPS THE ONLY TRUE EVIL ENCOUNTERED, BUT THE ONLY ONES NEVER CONFRONTED...OF MY FIGHT WITH SHEN KUEI--WITH CAT--A FIGHT WITHOUT MEANING OR PITY...OF MY OPPORTUNITY TO SLAY HIM, AND MY REFUSAL...OF THE FACT THAT I GAINED NOTHING FROM HONG KONG--NOTHING BUT A CAT, PERHAPS A SYMBOL, AND CERTAINLY AN ANGER I DESPISE."

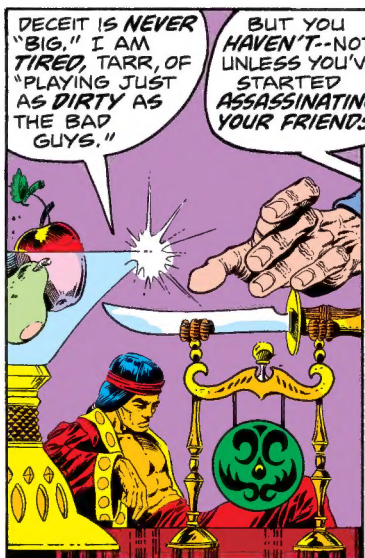






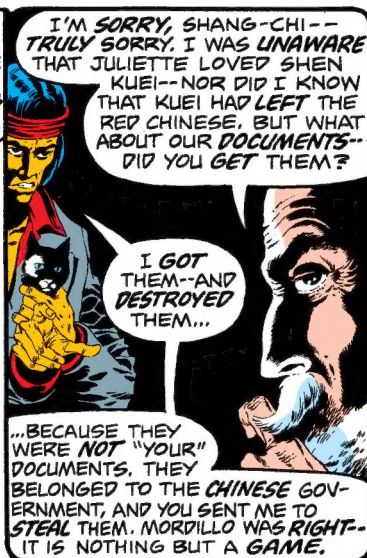
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, SHANG-CHI--BUT SOME ANSWERS HAD BETTER COME OUT. WHERE'S OUR AGENT? WAS SHE KILLED BY SHEN KUEI---

JULIETTE IS WHERE SHE BELONGS--WITH THE MAN SHE LOVES--THE MAN CALLED CAT-SHEN KUEI--WHO IS NOT A RED CHINESE AGENT, AS YOU CLAIMED!



DECEIT IS NEVER "BIG." I AM TIRED, TARR, OF "PLAYING JUST AS DIRTY AS THE BAD GUYS."

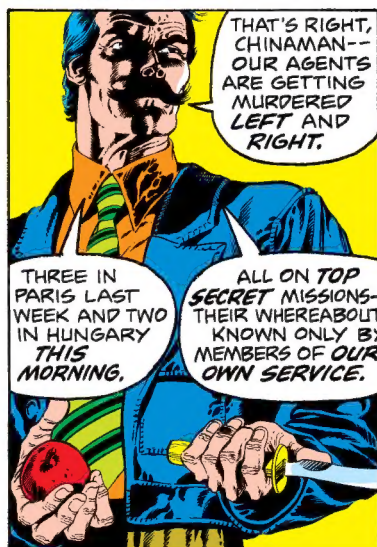
BUT YOU HAVEN'T--NOT UNLESS YOU'VE STARTED ASSASSINATING YOUR FRIENDS.



I'M SORRY, SHANG-CHI--TRULY SORRY, I WAS UNAWARE THAT JULIETTE LOVED SHEN KUEI--NOR DID I KNOW THAT KUEI HAD LEFT THE RED CHINESE. BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR DOCUMENTS--DID YOU GET THEM?

I GOT THEM--AND DESTROYED THEM...

...BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT "YOUR" DOCUMENTS. THEY BELONGED TO THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, AND YOU SENT ME TO STEAL THEM. MORDILLO WAS RIGHT--IT IS NOTHING BUT A GAME.



THAT'S RIGHT, CHINAMAN--OUR AGENTS ARE GETTING MURDERED LEFT AND RIGHT.

THREE IN PARIS LAST WEEK AND TWO IN HUNGARY THIS MORNING.

ALL ON TOP SECRET MISSIONS--THEIR WHEREABOUTS KNOWN ONLY BY MEMBERS OF OUR OWN SERVICE.



BELIEVE WHO YOU WILL ABOUT THE DOCUMENTS, SHANG-CHI, BUT I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH. THOSE PAPERS WERE OURS, AND THEY WERE VITAL.

THEY CONTAINED INFORMATION ON THE GREATEST THREAT TO THIS COUNTRY--AND TO THE WORLD--IN ALL OF HISTORY. PETRIE HERE WILL VOUCH FOR THAT.



OUR AGENTS ARE BEING SET UP. BY THEIR FELLOW AGENTS. ANY ONE OF US COULD BE NEXT--RESTON, LEIKO, SMITH, ME...EVEN YOU. WE'VE GOT TO LOCATE THE "MOLE"--THE DOUBLE-AGENT--BEFORE ANY MORE OF OUR PEOPLE ARE MURDERED!

AND IF YOU WON'T DO IT FOR SIR DENIS--FOR THE SERVICE--THEN DO IT FOR A FRIEND. DO IT FOR ME...!



I AM NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT PETRIE WILL VOUCH FOR! YOU HAVE BOTH LIVED WITHIN GAMES OF DECEIT FOR SO LONG THAT YOU NO LONGER KNOW WHAT TRUTH IS!

NOW LISTEN HERE, SHANG-CHI, I'LL ONLY TAKE SO MANY INSULTS FROM YOU...



DO IT TO PREVENT ANY MORE MURDERS, CHINAMAN--DO IT FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE!

SURELY EVEN A PACIFIST WOULDN'T TURN HIS BACK ON VIOLENCE WHEN HE KNOWS A FRIEND WILL DIE AS A RESULT OF IT.

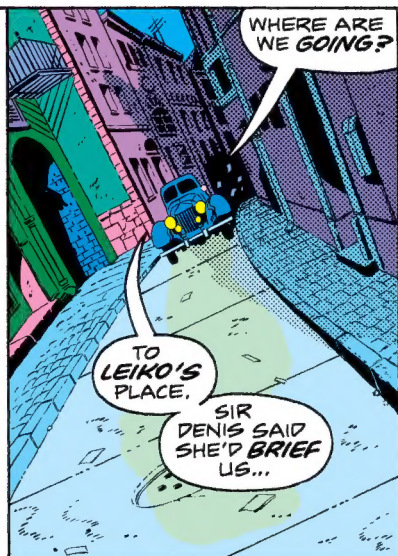
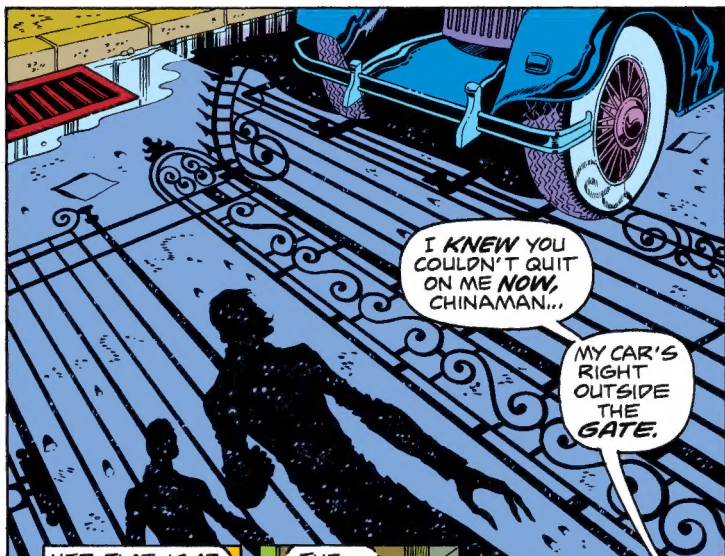
YOU MIGHT LIVE IN PEACE--

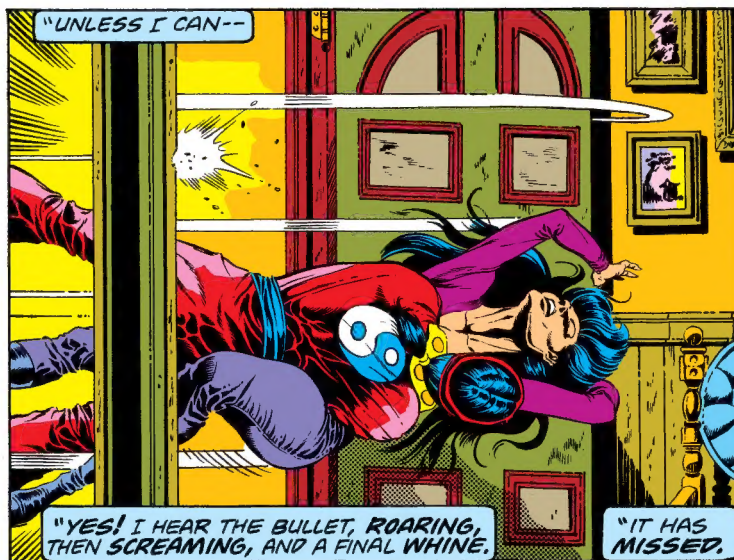
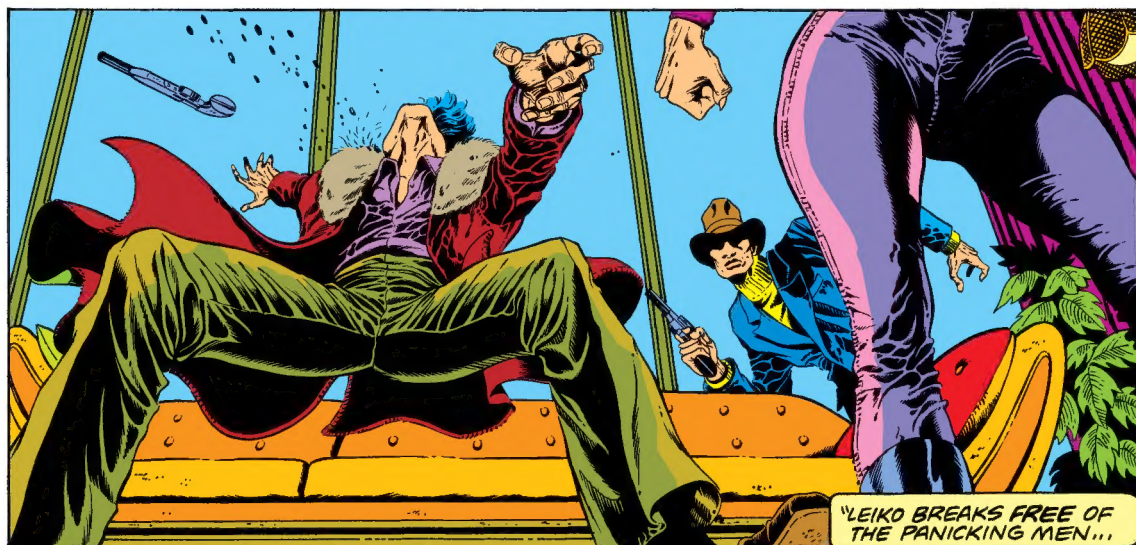
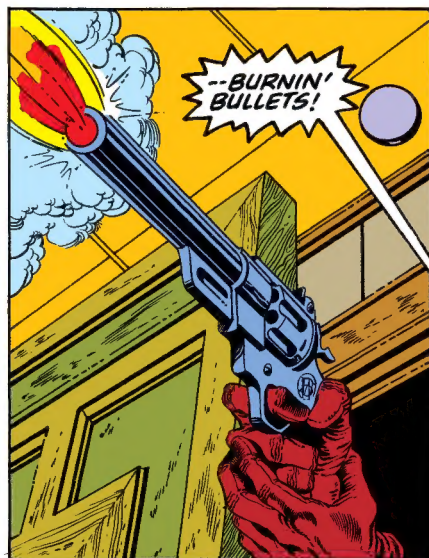
--BUT COULD YOU LIVE WITH YOURSELF?

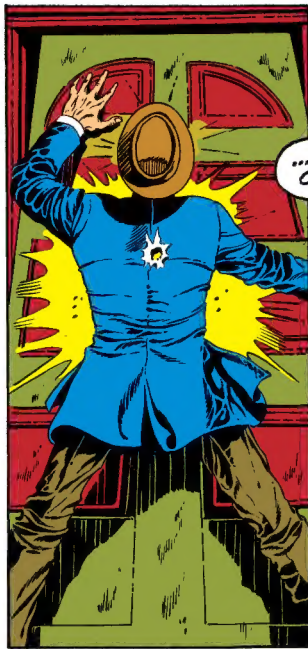
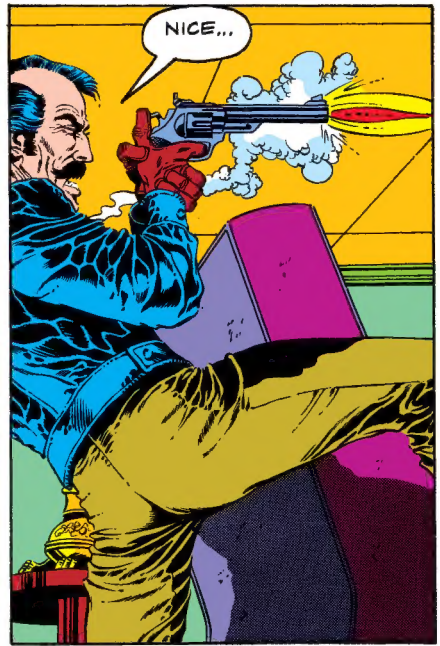
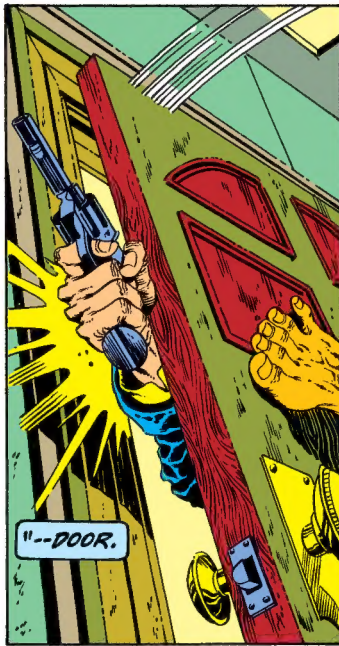


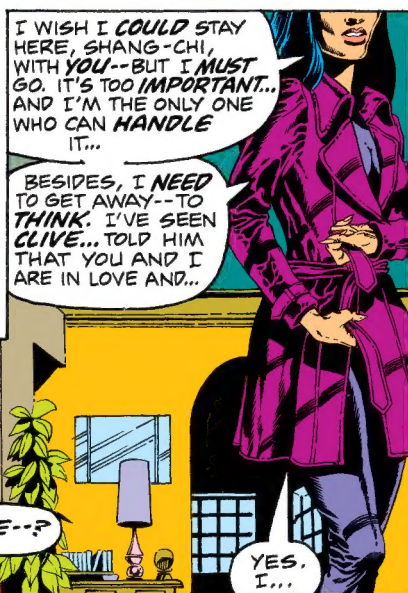
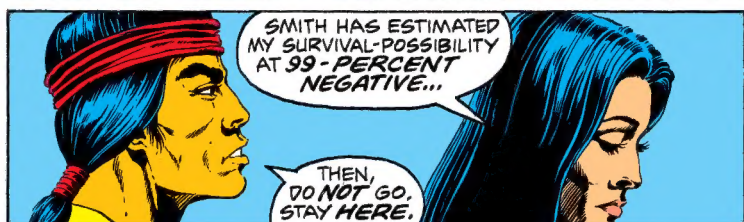
THEN TAKE NOTHING FROM ME, SMITH--FOR I HAVE NOTHING BUT INSULTS TO OFFER YOU.

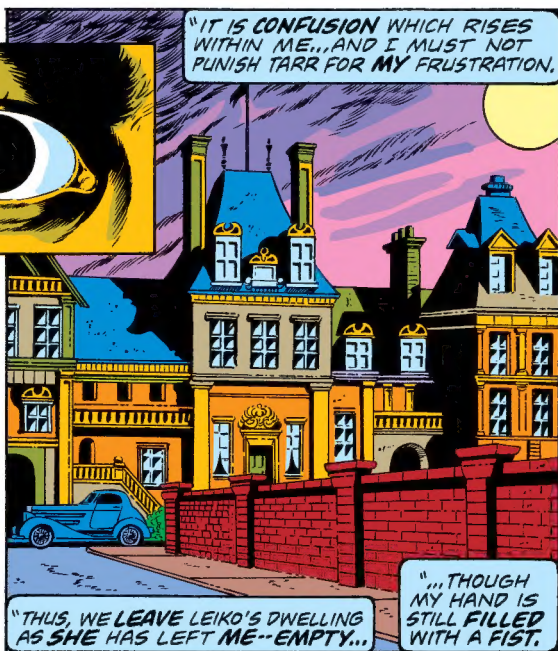
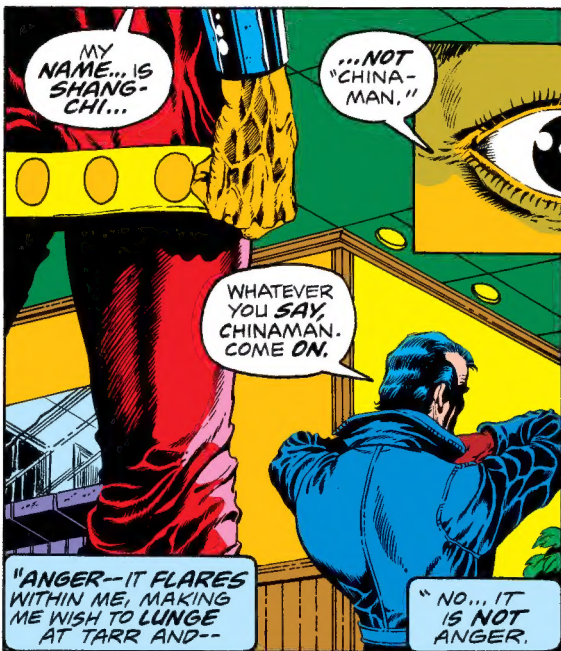
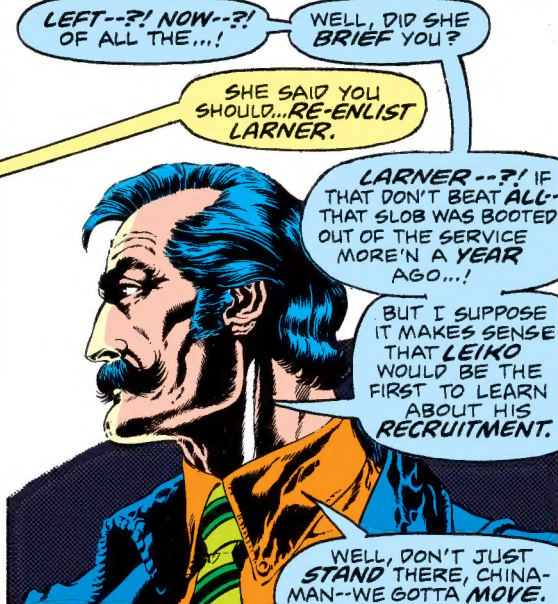
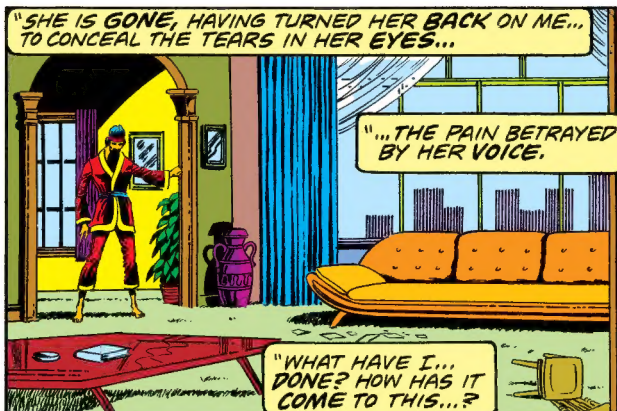
SHANG-CHI! WAIT! YOU CAN'T QUIT NOW...!

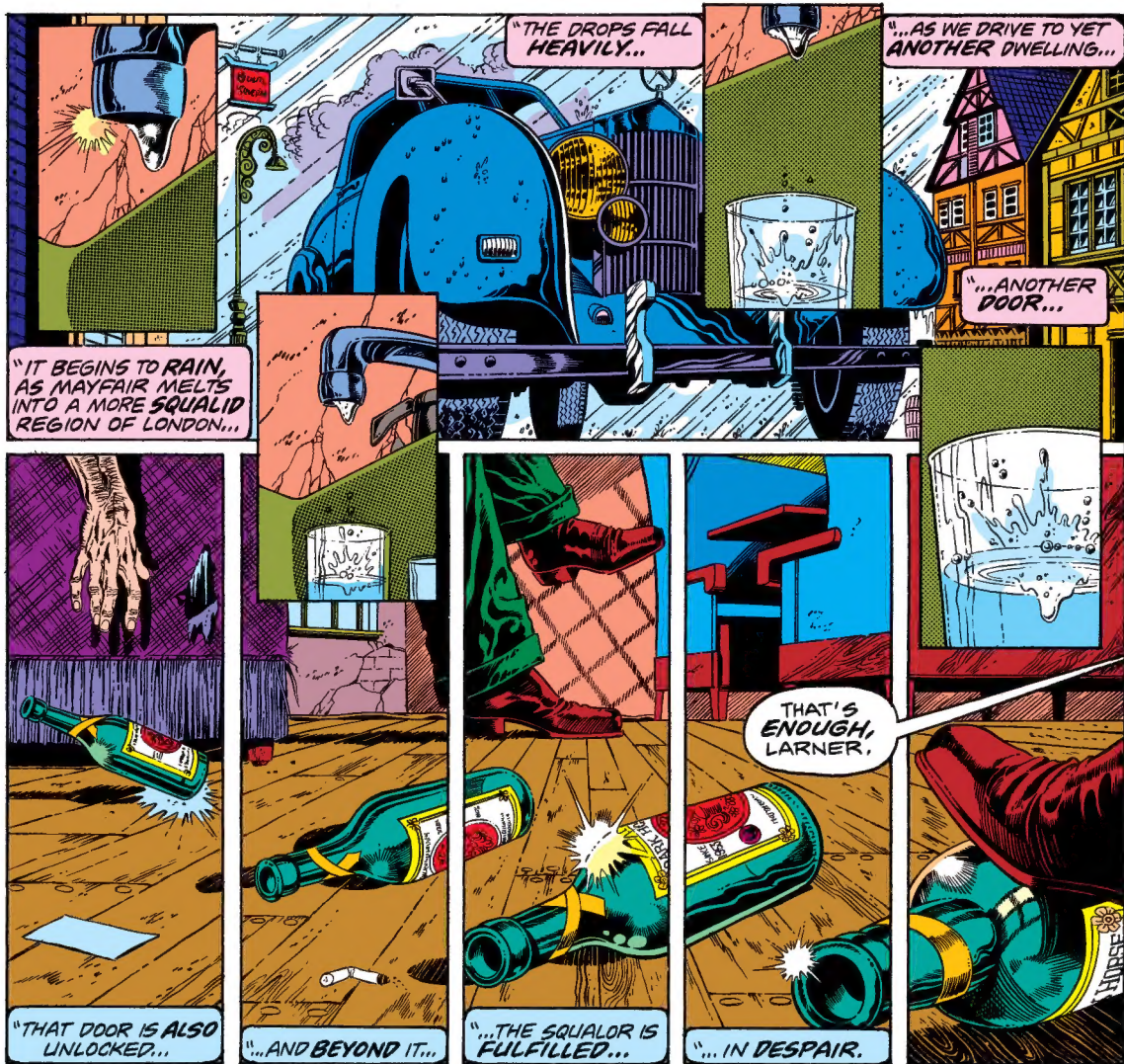












"THE DROPS FALL HEAVILY..."

"...AS WE DRIVE TO YET ANOTHER DWELLING..."

"...ANOTHER DOOR..."

"IT BEGINS TO RAIN, AS MAYFAIR MELTS INTO A MORE SQUALID REGION OF LONDON..."

"THAT DOOR IS ALSO UNLOCKED..."

"...AND BEYOND IT..."

"...THE SQUALOR IS FULFILLED..."

"...IN DESPAIR."

THAT'S ENOUGH, LARNER.

WELL, MR. HIGH-AND-MIGHTY BLACK JACK TARR...HOW DOES SMITH'S SEAT SMELL THESE DAYS?

YEAH? WELL, WHY DON'T YOU JUST SAVE THE SMELL OF THAT SEAT FOR YOURSELF, TARR!

SMITH DIDN'T WANT ME A YEAR AGO-- EXCEPT FOR A GOOD SWIFT BOOT IN THE PANTS OUT HIS BACK DOOR. AND I DON'T WANT HIM NOW--THE GUTTERS AROUND HERE ARE FILLED WITH URCHINS, YOU KNOW, IF I EVER FEEL THE URGE FOR A GOOD SWIFT BOOT.

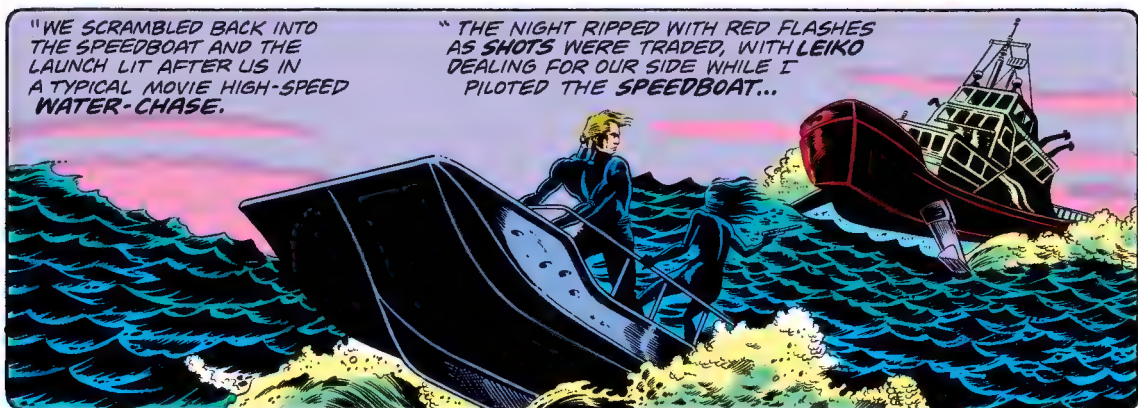
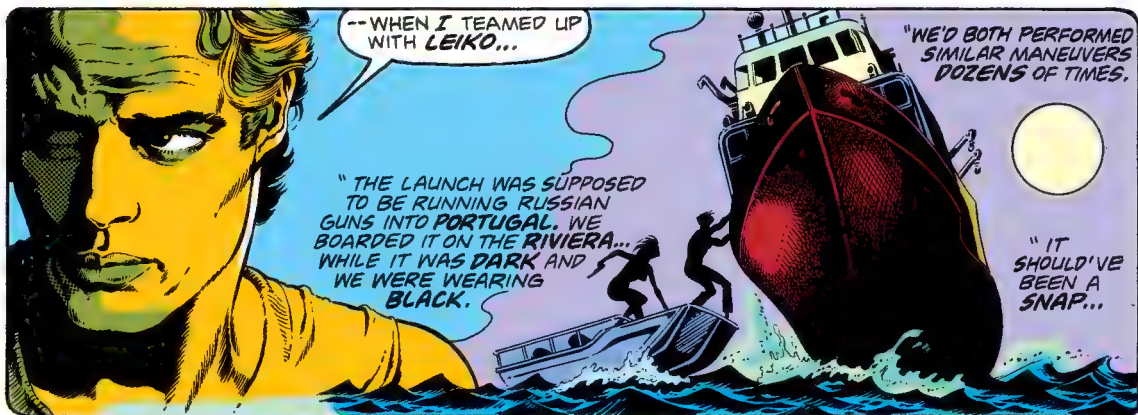
BESIDES, I'M A TRAITOR-- IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN. AND DO YOU KNOW WHY--? BECAUSE THAT LITTLE WITCH LEIKO LET MY JENNIE DIE...

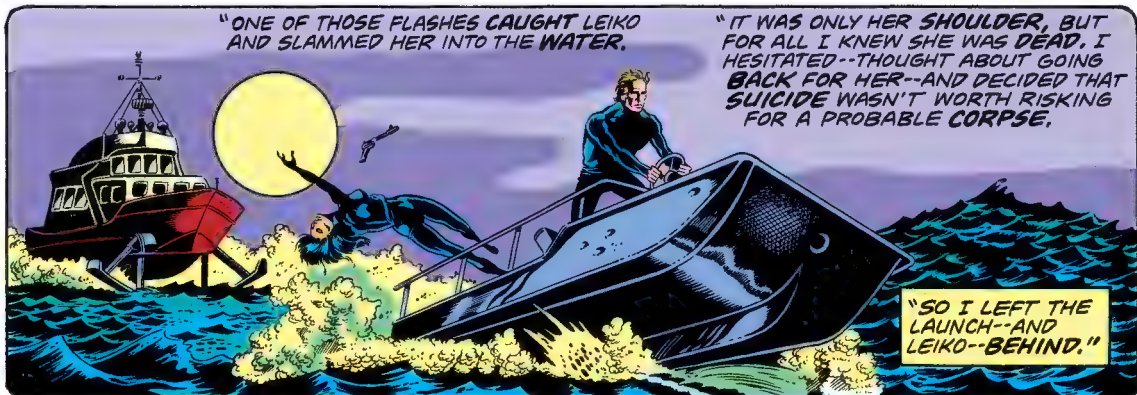
YOU REMEMBER HOW THEY TEAMED UP ON THAT MISSION TO BELGRADE--HOW JENNIE TRUSTED LEIKO, WITH EVERY OUNCE OF HER INNOCENT GUTS--HOW THE RUSSIANS BLEW THE WHISTLE ON THEIR OPERATION...

AND WHAT BRINGS A GENTLEMAN LIKE YOU SLUMMING AROUND HERE?

SMITH WANTS YOU BACK, LARNER-- FOR A JOB.

...AND HOW LEIKO CAME BACK ALONE, SAFE AND SOUND-- WITHOUT SO MUCH AS THE PIECES OF JENNIE'S BODY--?



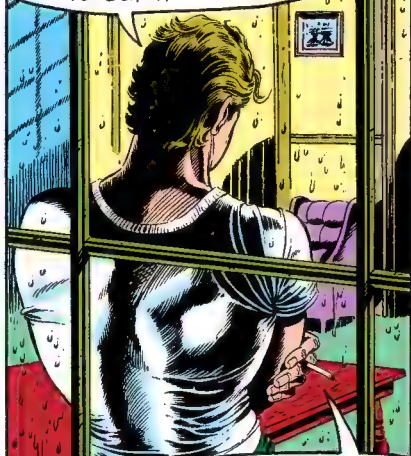


"ONE OF THOSE FLASHES CAUGHT LEIKO AND SLAMMED HER INTO THE WATER."

"IT WAS ONLY HER **SHOULDER**, BUT FOR ALL I KNEW SHE WAS **DEAD**. I **HESITATED**--THOUGHT ABOUT GOING **BACK** FOR HER--AND DECIDED THAT **SUICIDE** WASN'T WORTH RISKING FOR A PROBABLE **CORPSE**."

"SO I LEFT THE LAUNCH--AND LEIKO--BEHIND."

AND THAT'S WHY I'M A **TRAITOR**--A **BAD RISK**--AN AGENT WHO LOST HIS **GUTS**, WHO COULDN'T BACK UP HIS **PARTNER**. SMITH EVEN SAID I **WANTED** LEIKO TO BUY IT--



--THAT I **HATED** HER FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO **JENNIE**. BUT SMITH'S A **STUPID OLD MAN** FULL OF--

SHUT UP!!

WE HAD TO TRADE **THREE PORTUGUESE INFORMERS** JUST TO GET **LEIKO BACK!** YOU **FAILED**, LARNER, AND YOU WERE **DUMPED!** BUT SMITH WANTS YOU **BACK** NOW--

--AND YOU'RE GONNA **SHAPE UP**, KICK THE **BOTTLE**, AND COME **BACK!**



SWAK

AND YOU AIN'T GONNA SAY ONE **CROSSWISE WORD** AGAINST SIR DEN--



HUH--?!

WHO'S THAT?!

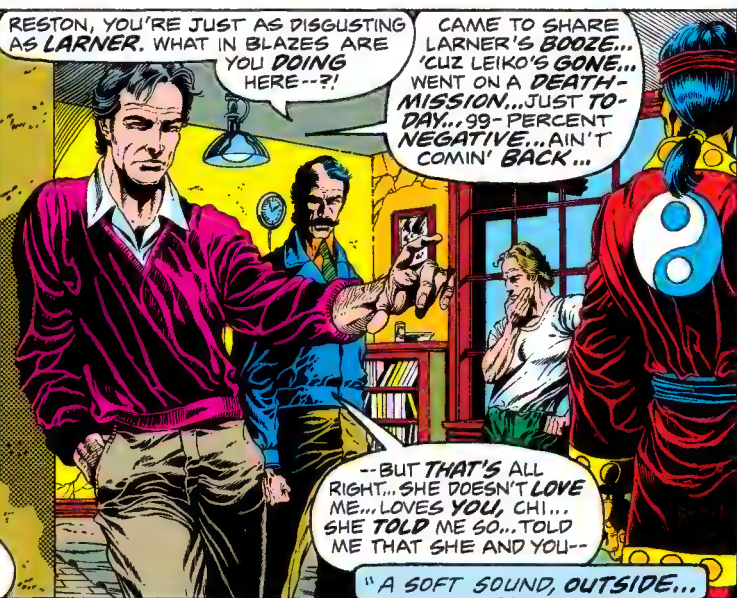
PEESH!



JUST ME, TARR... **DRUNK...**

"CLIVE RESTON...?"

...**DRUNK** 'CUZ **LEIKO'S** GONE...

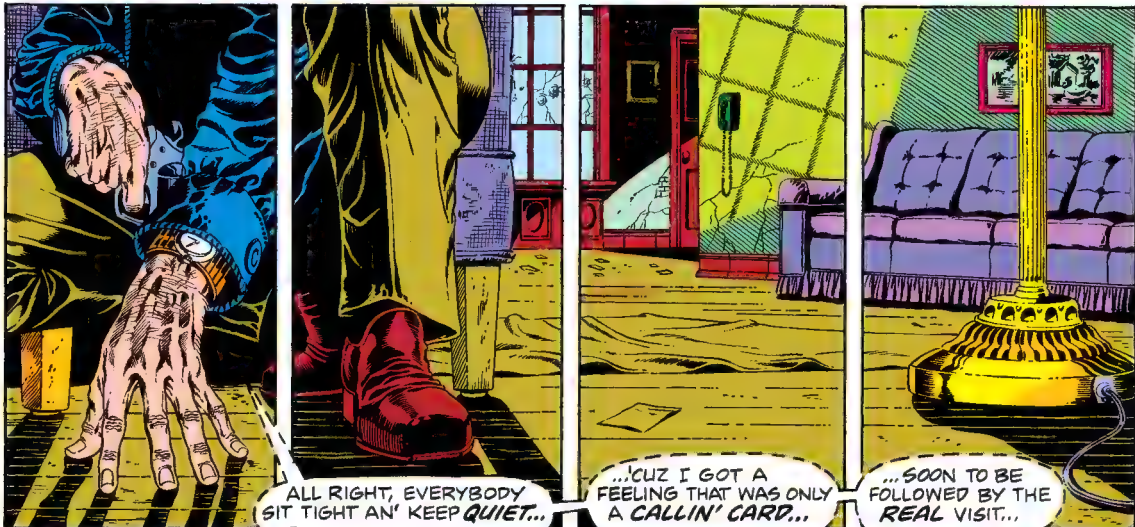
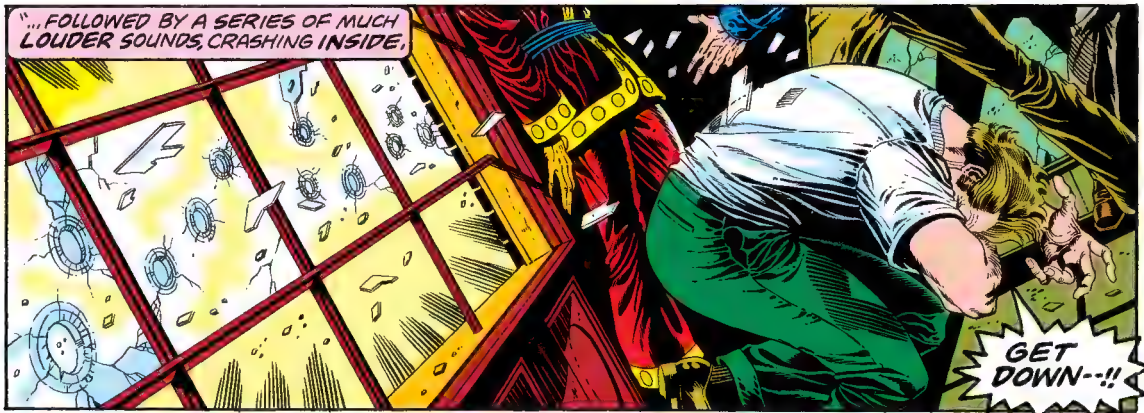


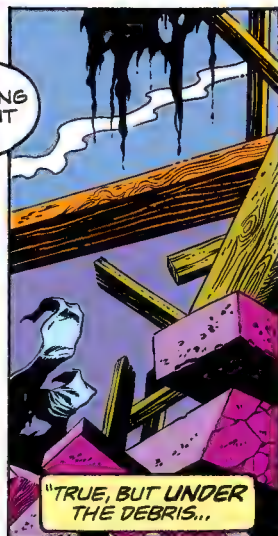
RESTON, YOU'RE JUST AS **DISGUSTING** AS **LARNER**. WHAT IN **BLAZES** ARE YOU **DOING** HERE--?!

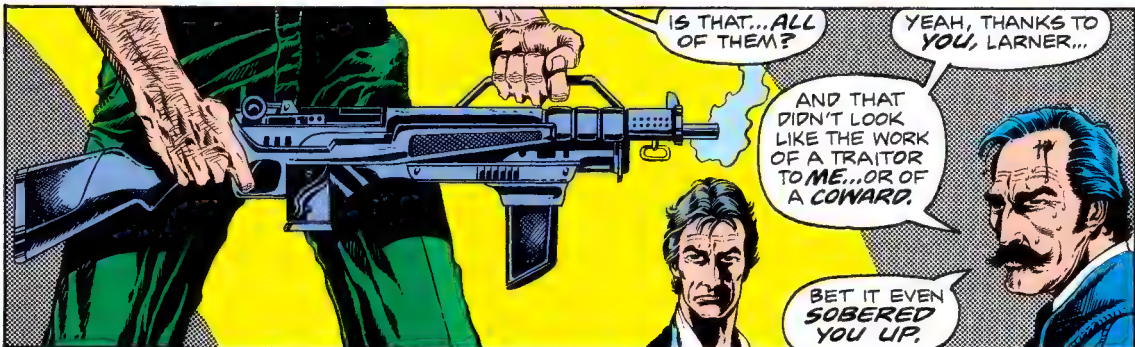
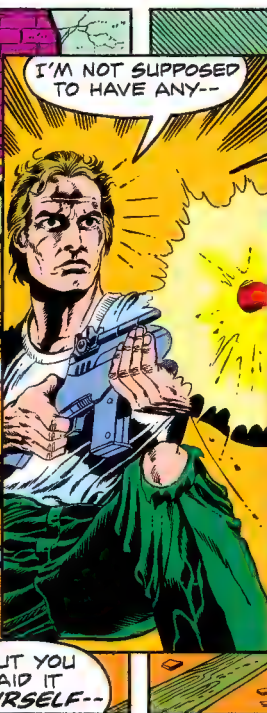
CAME TO SHARE LARNER'S **BOOZE**... 'CUZ **LEIKO'S GONE**... WENT ON A **DEATH MISSION**...JUST TO-DAY...99-PERCENT **NEGATIVE**...AIN'T COMIN' **BACK**...

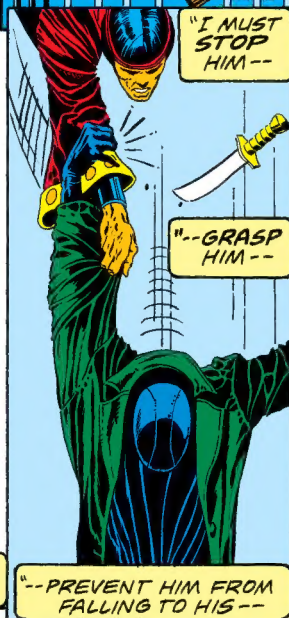
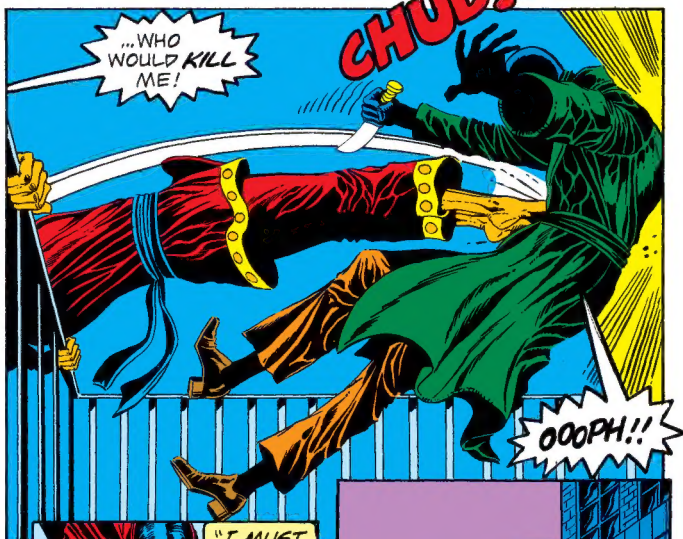
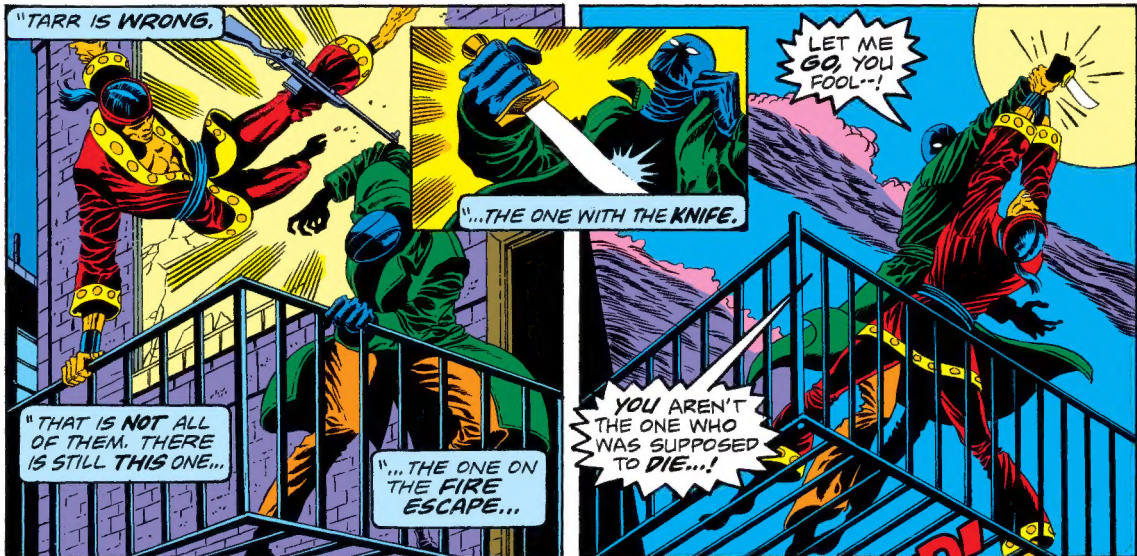
--BUT **THAT'S** ALL RIGHT...SHE DOESN'T **LOVE** ME...LOVES **YOU**, CHI... SHE **TOLD** ME SO...TOLD ME THAT SHE AND YOU--

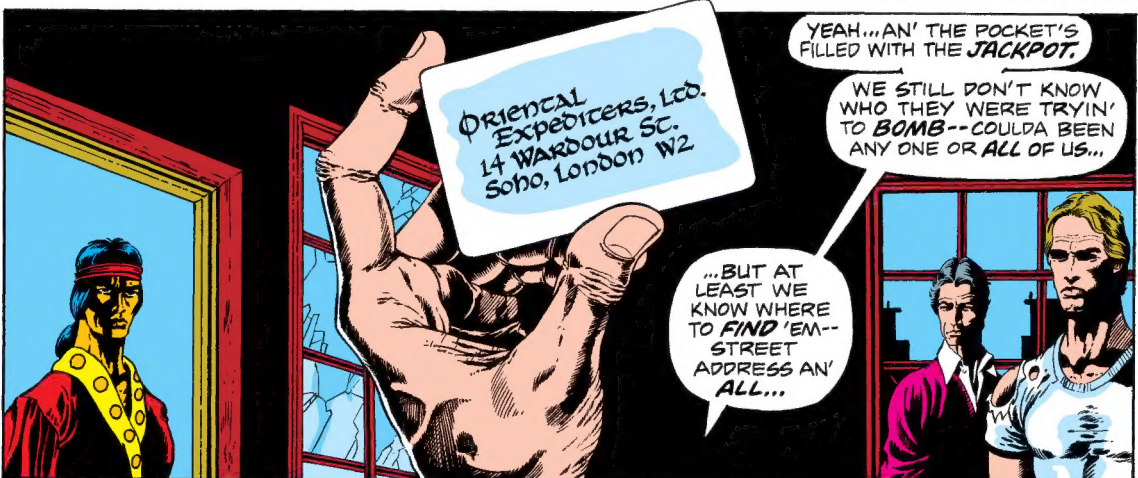
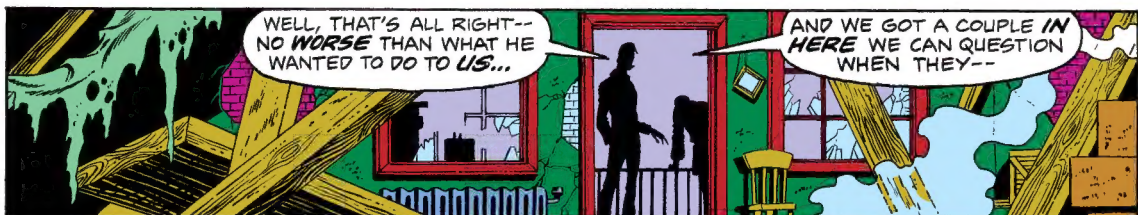
"A **SOFT SOUND**, **OUTSIDE**..."

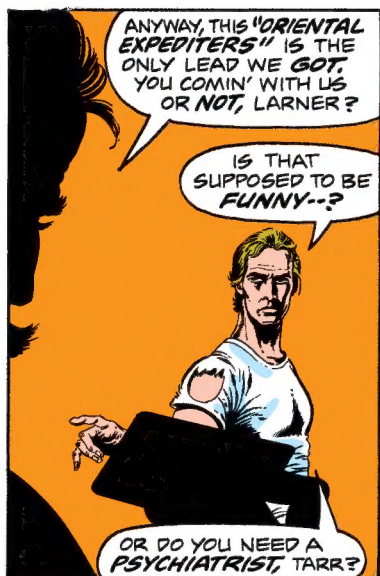












NEXT: PERHAPS ONE OF THE GREATEST SHOCKS EVER SPRUNG ON AN UNSUSPECTING READERSHIP-- AS WELL AS THE USUAL AMPLE QUOTA OF HIGH-GLOSSED ACTION, MYSTERY, & SUSPENSE-- *IN THE* THRILLER CALLED:

A DARKENED SHOP OF MURDERS!

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

46 MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

Dear Doug, Paul, and Co.,

I'm really rather sorry not to have offered my humble (if somewhat experienced) comments on the very excellent MASTER OF KUNG FU before now, but with the latest master-work you've created—"Death-Hand and the Sun of Mordillo"—I find I *must* speak out and add my words and hopes to all the other readers who believe that maybe one extra single letter can help, in some way, to keep the Moench/Gulacy team together on the strip. MOKF is simply too good not to warrant a few words from me now.

As a whole, each issue of MOKF is like experiencing a movie—rather reminiscent of the earlier James Bond films (those coy references to Clive Reston's father being indeed the illustrious British agent are quite remarkably appropriate). We've already seen that Douglas Moench possesses quite a filmatic expertise when it comes to producing comics...and the various techniques of the cinema employed by Paul Gulacy are indeed screamingly evident; putting the two together on a high adventure/deeply philosophical strip such as Shang-Chi's is like blending a highly reactive solute with an equally reactive solvent. The results here are dynamite!

Case in point: MOKF #35 ("Death-Hand, etc.") the use of such reverse-tactics (been studying your Orson Welles, I see) as high-angle shots to portray power rather than insignificance (for example) went hand-in-hand with crosscutting for rapid character/plot development (especially on page 14), closeups for emphasis (most powerfully, I thought, in page 23's last panel), and the final fade-away with cinemascopic foreground and fading background objects for counterpoint. Absolutely beautiful—and all the more so since Doug Moench does, in this strip, *flow* with the art. The simple, almost facetious, single word "Bye" used in the last panel of page 14 not only communicated Mordillo's strange obsession with childhood/innocent simplicity, but gave the reader a real feeling of *movement*. Excellent literary discipline.

As for Brynocki, I can't say enough. He's imaginatively marvelous.

And that's it. When I start grinning enthusiastically at a revamped mascot from Big Boy hamburgers, I know I'm losing it for sure! Take care, people, and keep up keepin' up...

Frank Lovece
947 Maple Drive, No. 15
Morgantown, WV 26505

We'll try, Frank, but keepin' up with these infernally eternal deadline schedules is almost more than Doug and Paul can handle these days—what with Doug buying a (phenomenally beautiful, ahem) new-house-which-looks-richly-olde in Pennsylvania, and deciding to move every one of his kazillions of books, records, magazines, and comics by himself (with the help of Deb James and friend Rob Takiguchi, he hastens to acknowledge) rather than pay the Seven Santini Brothers for the exorbitant use of their muscles and moving van...and with Paul getting all excited over his new James Bond-like sports car, roaring all over the Ohio countryside and so on...neither one of the two lads has been spending as much time at the typewriter/drawing board as he'd truly like to. But take heart, people; things seem to have cooled off now. Every one of Doug's kazillion books, records, magazines, and comics is in its neat place on the shelves...and Paul just got a flat tire. So the midnight oil is once again burning in both Pennsylvania and Ohio.

And what's this about keeping the team together? There are no plans—at present, anyway, and knock on wood—for our writer/artist team to let a schism stop 'em *now*. In fact, Doug has the Kung Fu book plotted a good eight issues into

the future and (delightful surprise of the issue time) Paul has decided to start inking his own pencils, beginning with this very issue! (Both Paul and Doug would like to publicly thank Dapper Dan Adkins for his truly fine rendering of past Gulacy pencils, of course, but somehow we think the very best is yet to come.)

Dear Marvel,

A beautiful portrait of the *true* Kung Fu values of life and control in the last pages of MOKF #35. My compliments to Doug Moench, and a question: Are you, Doug, one with this flow of thought, or are your stories merely extractions from some other source?

Tom Collins
(no address given)

We hate to beat around the bush in reply to such a direct question, Tom, but Doug has just finished reading Vincent Bugliosi's *HELTER SKELTER*, an incredibly horrifying account of the Tate-LaBianca massacres...and after completing the book (undoubtedly the scariest thing anyone could ever hope or fear to read), Doug is somewhat loathed to admit being "one with" *anything*. Oh, he fully believes in the thoughts and philosophy he espouses for the Shang-Chi character (at least in largely untested principle), but he's no longer so sure about the rhetoric used to express his "flowing oneness" with any ideology.

Dear Doug and Paul,

Despite Shang-Chi's joining Her Majesty's Secret Soivice (and my earlier disapproval of same), the strip has maintained its distinctly humanistic approach—much to my surprise. Sure there's all the secret agent jazz, but interesting relationships (such as Reston's emotions regarding Leiko and Mordillo) are still around. Too, Chi seems to be playing a "Man-Thing" role, being more an intaker of events than a protagonist, which allows him to be himself and not conform into a Reston. If Doug can maintain this duality of philosophy *and* spying, then this secret agent bit might not be that bad a move. What does this prove? Simply, never count your Marvel chickens before they hatch.

Aside from the emotional entanglements of Reston, the confusion of Shang-Chi over Mordillo's playthings was the most interesting aspect of #34—and his confusion was our laugh. Who would ever expect to see incarnations of such offbeat characters as Casey Jr. and Humpty Dumpty woven into a MOKF tale? And the miniature John Wayne took the cake, and icing too. His "mon-sewer" was so reminiscent of "The Comancheros." Great satire, Doug. And can we ignore Marcel Marceau and "The March of the Wooden Soldiers" robots? Nosireebob.

The only comment I'll make on the art is that I'd like to see Dan Adkins remain on the inking. He has all of Paul's moves worked out beautifully.

Dean Mullaney
81 Delaware Street
Staten Is., NY 10304

Our reply to Frank Lovece's letter reveals our similar feelings about Dan Adkins, Dean; however, the one person who'd likely have Paul's moves worked out even more beautifully than Dan is, of course, Paul himself. We hope you'll agree.

And we're glad you came over to our ("Secret Agent") side. Doug originally made the move purely on grounds of *deus ex machina*; it was simply too difficult, plot-wise, to get a pacifist to erupt in violent kung fu action without having him attacked every time he turned a corner. And the getting-attacked-around-every-corner bit was simply getting spread far too thin.

Hey, we've run out of room! Bye...and be good.

The Marvel Value Stamp will return with the next issue!